



Three galleries are now located at Greenbank Farm, an added draw for the winery, cafe and other shops at the popular attraction for tourists and locals.

The Galleries at Greenbank: Whidbey treasure becomes new mecca for art

Three galleries create synergy – and a new art center

Story & photos by Carolyn Tamler

A LITTLE MORE than 10 years ago, the local residents of Whidbey Island banded together to save Greenbank Farm from turning into a major residential development.

Thanks to their efforts, thousands of visitors each year are able to enjoy the special sense of peace and tranquility that surrounds the 100-year old barns and acres of farmland.

In 2004, construction began on a new building, Building C. The architecture of this new addition blended so well with the old buildings that many who come to the farm are unaware that the construction is new.

At first, Building C tenants included an artist's cooperative gallery, a tack shop and an antique store. When the tack shop and then the antique store closed their doors, new possibilities for the spaces became possible.

As of November 2008, Building C at Greenbank Farm became home to three art galleries that show the works of more than 20 artists, and the galleries work together to promote and market Greenbank Farm as a new art center on Whidbey Island.

ARTWORKS GALLERY

The first tenant in the new build-



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1. An occupation requiring advanced education.

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ing was Artworks Gallery, a nonprofit organization that currently has 11 artist-members. Other artists provide works on consignment. At this time, 16 artists are represented in the gallery.

Valerie Moore, the current president of Artworks Gallery, joined together with two other artists, Laurel Davis and Jean Valdez to develop the initial concept. Moore, who is the only one of the three still associated with Artworks Gallery, recalls, "The three of us had coffee together one day in 2005 and talked about how we had been showing our works in several different galleries, and we decided, 'Let's do our own gallery!'"

A friend had told Moore about the new space at Greenbank Farm. When the three friends visited the site, they knew they had found what they wanted. A proposed business plan was submitted to the Greenbank Farm Management Group and was quickly accepted. Artworks Gallery opened its doors Memorial Day 2005.

As a cooperative, all members are invited to share their opinions and ideas, and they all take turns working in the gallery.

"With three fine art galleries in a row, Greenbank Farm has become a must-see destination for art lovers."

**Rob Schouten,
Rob Schouten Gallery**

Artworks Gallery provides a broad range of art items and prices so that a visitor can find an artistic greeting card for \$3 or an unusual outdoor sculpture for \$3,500. Customers include locals, weekend visitors from the Puget Sound area, and tourists from around the world.

ROB SCHOUTEN GALLERY

When the tack shop went out of business in 2007, the space remained vacant for nearly a year. Rob Schouten, who had a workshop at Greenbank Farm since 2002, kept looking at the empty space, and he and his wife, poet Victory Lee Schouten, talked about the possibility of opening their own gallery.

The Schouten's got approval from the Greenbank Farm Management Group and began renovations on the space in April 2008. They realized their dream when the Rob Schouten Gallery opened the following month.

Rob Schouten was born in the Netherlands, but moved to the United States in 1979 and began his career as an artist in Seattle in 1980. He started in watercolors, pencil and some mixed media, but now works exclusively with oil. Rob's works blend symbolism, Asian art and culture with love of nature and a universal view of the human experience. Rob has lived on Whidbey for 25 years.

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2003	100,000	449,018	3.70	100,000	397,542	28.69
2004	100,000	568,233	3.50	100,000	551,710	10.88
2005	100,000	692,623	3.65	100,000	683,709	4.91
2006	100,000	824,372	4.00	100,000	907,456	15.79
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The Rob Schoeten Gallery opened in May and has enjoyed excellent sales.

Rob and Victory met in 1987 and married a year later. They are business partners in the gallery. Victory is a co-owner as well as the manager and special events coordinator, and handles just about every other business and promotional aspect of the Rob Schouten Gallery. When they told friends and acquaintances about their plans, many thought they were a bit crazy choosing this out-of-the-way site for an art gallery, and as the economy worsened, there were even more concerns voiced about whether this new business could survive.

The concerns of others were soon allayed. The Schoutens developed a business strategy and positioning that were keys to their success, and resulted in excellent sales figures. Rob explains: “We offer high-quality art in an attractive setting at an excellent price. Visitors to our gallery come away with the impression of having found an amazing find. Not only that, they are treated with friendly personal attention that makes their visit to our gallery and Greenbank Farm a memorable experience.”

Once the doors of the Rob Schouten Gallery were opened, another concept for Building C began to emerge. Victory notes, “I had a vision that Greenbank Farm could be an art center.”

RAVEN ROCKS GALLERY AND GIFTS

D.M. Windwalker Taibi’s work evolved from the awareness of his Lakota heritage (he is half Lakota and half Sicilian) that he discovered when he was in his 40s. He had been a special education teacher for 20 years, but in 1990 a traumatic event in his life led him to discover a deep desire to explore his artistic talents. In 1996, he quit teaching and became a full-time artist.

Taibi lived most of his life in the eastern, central and southeast parts of the United States. When he met Mary Jo Oxreider in 2002, they discovered immediately that they wanted to be together. He moved to Seattle to join her in 2003, and later that year they agreed they wanted to reside on Whidbey Island. After their marriage, they continued to build an artistic and business partnership.

Taibi and Oxreider were bitten by the gallery bug after being a “flash in the pan” temporary resident at the Bayview Cash Store. Their four-month experience there in 2006 led them to conclude they didn’t want to give up having a gallery. Shortly afterward, they discovered an available space on First Street in downtown Langley. They opened Raven Rocks Studio in January 2007.

They were doing well, but the space was too small and too expensive, and they closed in February the following year. A few months later, the antique store closed at Building C, and they learned this space was available from their long-time friends, the Schoutens. The addition of Raven Rocks fit Victory Schouten’s vision that Greenbank Farm could become a significant art center, and Raven Rocks seemed an ideal choice for another gallery to fill the space at the end of the building.

Taibi and Oxreider were sold immediately when they looked at the available space: “There was an openness and a sense of an empty canvass with lots of possibilities.”

When Taibi presented his plan to the Greenbank management group there was “an astoundingly enthusiastic reception.” Everything clicked. The grand opening for Raven Rocks Gallery and Gifts was Nov. 7.

The gallery features hand-woven tapestries, purses, necklaces and wall hangings by Taibi, and Oxreider’s internationally collected Fantasy House series and other paintings, prints, wall hangings and plaques. They also exhibit works by other artists including acrylic and watercolor paintings, mixed-media pieces and more. There are many original works, but there are also fine-art prints, giclee prints and note cards. Throughout the year, Raven Rocks will also offer themed shows, demonstrations and workshops.

A VISIT TO GREENBANK FARM

It’s easy to spend the better part of a day at Greenbank Farm. In addition to the galleries, visitors can enjoy a meal at the cozy Whidbey Pies cafe, sample Northwest wines at the Greenbank Winery tasting room and select from a wide array of cheeses, delicatessen items and gifts from the Greenbank Cheese Shop. Of course, visitors also enjoy several miles of trails and watching the alpacas, geese, ducks and other wildlife at the farm.

On a clear day, those who walk to the top of the ridge, the narrowest

place on the island, are rewarded with some of the most spectacular vistas on Whidbey: views of the Olympics and the Cascades are in the distance and bucolic farm scenes are up close.

When the weather cooperates, the café provides lunches to go that can be enjoyed at picnic tables by a picturesque pond.

Above all, a sense of ease and peace pervades the farm. Many local residents are regular visitors to the farm, and it has become a prime location for tourists.

FIRST FRIDAY AT THE FARM

Greenbank Farm's "First Friday at the Farm" has quickly become a must-do for many Whidbey Islanders and a special place to bring their family and friends who are visiting. On the first Friday of each month, from 5 to 8 p.m., visitors can enjoy wine tasting, featuring a different vintner each month, and an art walk. All of the shops are open until 8 p.m., and the café is open serving a special themed, five-course, fixed price dinner prepared by a new local chef every month (reservations required).

For \$12, a visitor can purchase a "Wine Passport" that includes wine tasting at the Greenbank Wine Shop and additional wine tastings and treats at the three galleries. Art Herrera, Manager of the Greenbank Farm Wine Shop and Tasting Room, is enthusiastic about the new energy at the farm: "Greenbank Farm is definitely becoming a hub for good food, excellent wines and distinctive and affordable art."

Since the first Friday in January 2009 is the day after New Years, there was a feeling people might be ready to take a break from the festivities. So, the First Friday Wine and Art Walk of 2009 will be Feb. 6, when the featured vintner will be Willis Hall.

THE GALLERIES AT GREENBANK

Rob Schouten believes that "with three fine art galleries in a row, Greenbank Farm has become a must-see destination for art lovers." Visitors will not only be impressed with the



Atworks Gallery is a cooperative with 11 artist-members. It was the first gallery at Greenbank Farm.

variety and quality of art, but with the inviting atmosphere and friendly attitudes projected by the gallery proprietors. They want those who come to the galleries to feel free to wander and ask questions, and they hope visitors will make many return visits ... and

bring their friends.

All three galleries share similar winter hours: open six days a week; closed on Tuesdays. For information about all of the events happening at the Greenbank Farm, visit www.greenbankfarm.com.

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